The Planning Inspectorate

Meeting note

Project name	East Anglia Green Enablement (GREEN) Project
File reference	EN020027
Status	**Final**
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	04 April 2022
Meeting with	National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET)
Venue	Microsoft Teams
Meeting objectives	Project Inception Meeting
Circulation	All attendees

Summary of key points discussed and advice given

The Planning Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) advised that a note of the meeting would be taken and published on its website in accordance with section 51 of the Planning Act 2008 (the PA2008). Any advice given under section 51 would not constitute legal advice upon which applicants (or others) could rely.

The Inspectorate explained that the publication of the meeting note could be delayed up to six months, or until a formal scoping request had been submitted (if requested by an Applicant for commercial sensitivity reasons).

Introduction to the Project

The project comprises of:

- A new 400Kv overhead line – Between Norwich and Bramford
- A new 400Kv overhead line – Between Bramford and Tilbury, with an underground section within Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- A new 400Kv substation – To facilitate the connection of North Falls and Five Estuaries offshore wind farm projects

The Applicant highlighted the Holistic Network Design (HND)/ Offshore Transmission Network Review (OTNR) which is being led by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). This review addresses potential barriers to connecting new offshore wind projects to onshore networks.

The Applicant stated that both offshore and onshore solutions need to be developed in unison to ensure necessary network infrastructure is reduced and to help meet 2030 and 2050 carbon targets. The Applicant states that this will also help achieve the Government's offshore wind ambition of 40GW by 2030.

The Inspectorate queried about the type of pylons which are to be used for the project. The Applicant advised this is yet to be finalised so cannot rule any pylon type out at this time.

The Inspectorate asked whether specific sections of the route posed engineering difficulties. The Applicant advised that expected points of note are through Essex as there is a long corridor that comes inland, (avoiding other options considered in proximity to the coast (direct route) which has high environmentally sensitivity). The inland route is therefore longer.

The Inspectorate queried whether surveys of birds and flight paths have been considered. The Applicant responded that these had not been conducted yet. The Inspectorate advised these would be an important consideration. The Applicant stated that they have only recently appointed their EIA contractors but recognise the importance of these surveys which will be undertaken as soon as practicable.

The Inspectorate advised that consideration may be needed for routeing affected by a number of solar projects. The Applicant advised that to the best of their knowledge interaction with those have been avoided but if another project is consented that they are unaware of they are prepared for the projects to co-exist and will work with developers to ensure that this is the case.

The Inspectorate queried whether there may be future ability to provide grid connections for solar farms. The Applicant advised that this is mainly dependent on the amount of generation that solar farms are producing with only the largest looking for a connection to the 400kv transmission network. The Applicant is working with the local Distribution Network Operator, UKPN, and will discuss any opportunities in this regard.

Please see a preliminary timeline for the project below.

Stage	**Start**	**Finish**
Routeing and Siting	Q2 2021	Q1 2022
Project website launch	Q1 2022	Q1 2022
Non-statutory Consultation	Q2 2022	Q2 2022
Statutory Consultation	Q2 2022	Q2 2023
Environmental Impact Assessment	Q3 2022	Q2 2024
DCO Submission	Q4 2024	Q4 2024
DCO Examination	Q4 2024	Q2 2026
Construction	Q1 2027	Q4 2030
Connection	Q2 2030	Q4 2030

Existing Transmission Network

The Applicant explained that the existing grid network was developed in the 1960's to supply regional demand to Norwich and Ipswich. The existing network was built using the largest pylons at the time and operates on the highest voltage (400kV).

Each line of pylons carries two discrete circuits with four circuits connecting to/from the region. The Applicant explained that the system must be planned to enable a secure and stable supply of electricity, even if two circuits were out of service, to ensure energy security.

The Applicant highlighted three solutions to this.

1. The installation of power control devices at existing substations.
2. Reconductor existing routes by replacing existing conductors with the largest conductors.
3. Build new routes to relieve the demand on the existing ones.

The Applicant confirmed that work has already comments installing power control devices and reconducting existing lines in the area but this does not produce the capacity that is now required in the area.

Combining Drivers – East Anglia GREEN

The Applicant stated that by combining the drivers, which consist of Security and Quality of Supply Standards, Network Options Assessment (NOA) and Customer, an overall reduction in required infrastructure can be achieved.

Non-statutory consultation – 21 April 2022 to 16 June 2022

The purpose of the Applicant's non-statutory consultation is to introduce and provide an overview of the project to the public, explain the development journey, details of other options considered, any preferred corridor/route and preferred substation site.

The Applicant advised that a website has already been launched but will be updated when face-face events are launched. 12 face to face events and 12 webinars are planned, and the Applicant is in the process of booking meetings with MP's and Local Authorities.

Feedback by 13 effected local authorities regarding the draft consultation strategy has led to the consultation period being extended to 8 weeks, and more adverts have been placed in additional local newspapers. Despite venue suggestions being made to the Applicant by local authorities, some were pre-booked but requests have been accommodated where possible. The Applicant will also provide information to Parish Councils both digitally and physically to raise awareness.

The Inspectorate queried the number of local authorities involved in the project. The Applicant advised that at present there are 13 local authorities in total, three county, one unitary and nine districts. There are also 117 Parish Councils within the route corridor.

Approach to Routeing and Siting

The Applicant advised that study areas are informed by the connection points identified in the strategic proposal and consideration is given to environmental impacts.

The Applicant has identified various threaded pathways that can be taken but explained that viable options are identified before an appraisal is undertaken to identify the advantages of each option. National Grid works to the Holford and Horlock Rules, internal guidelines for the

routeing of transmissions lines and siting of substations respectively. These state as a first principle that new lines should "avoid altogether, if possible, the major areas of highest amenity value", meaning Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), National Parks, Heritage Coasts and World Heritage Sites.

The Applicant acknowledged that a corridor 1-2 miles wide may be of concern to the public. However, the Applicant explained that they need to have a balance between keeping options open without suggesting a large area of possible development.

The Applicant worked under several considerations while identifying appropriate options, such as:

- “Seek to avoid” or “Seek to minimise” areas.
- Buffers added to areas where effects may be felt beyond the immediate proximity of the project
- Air quality and noise do not differentiate between corridors

The Applicant has to know where the overhead line will be located before the substation can be located. Therefore, routeing and siting were conducted in parallel using approximate area zones while options were being developed.

The Inspectorate queried if a direct replacement to existing lines was possible. The Applicant advised that the existing line would have the cables replaced due to their age, however the existing line cannot be upgraded to the required capacity which is why the project is suggesting another line to support capacity.

The Applicant advised that the project is one single application rather than two as they will need to be constructed at the same time. This will also avoid the need to two DCO’s having to be examined at the same time. As both will have issues that crossover, a single DCO may be preferred by all parties.

The Inspectorate queried the length that the project will cover. The Applicant advised on a total length of approximately 180km for project.

Norwich main to Bramford

This option is located with Breckland District to the West, Broads National Park and Suffolk Coast AONB to the East and has gentle valleys that cross from the West to the East. There is also an existing 400kv line situated in the area.

The Applicant considered several options in this area which varied from parallel to the existing line, 5km east and west and 10km east and west.

A close parallel option, located within 100m of the existing line was discounted due to:

- Engineering and construction risks – such as crossing the railway at Flordon and the A14.
- Diversions to avoid buildings – The use of heavy-duty angle towers would be required to avoid existing buildings and this would result in encirclement.

- Additional environmental effects – woodland could not be avoided. Sturston Golf Club could also not be avoided.
- Cost and programme – extending construction beyond 2030.

The Applicant identified option NB1 as the preferred option. This option is located parallel to the existing overhead line South of Norwich Main and diverges at Flordon. It is also located West of Diss and crosses the A14, the River Gipping and a railway line between Stowmarket and Needham Market. Finally, the option enters Bramford substation from the North-West.

Connection node substation

The Applicant selected Zone A as their preferred option as it is furthest from the coast, reducing the potential to affect designated ecology sites. Zone A also requires a shorter length of overhead line which means fewer pylons and fewer effects, especially to the visuals of the area. Zone A is located North of the Lawford Grid 132kV substation.

Bramford to connection node

The Applicant's preferred option for the Bramford connection node enters Bramford substation from the South-East and runs parallel to the A12. It crosses the AONB to the West of Stratford St Mary and Approaches the connection node North of Ardleigh. Finally, it enters the connection node from the West.

This option is preferred as it reduces impacts on landscape, ecology and socioeconomics compared to other options. The landscape impact through the AONB is less as the visual impacts of buried cable are temporary and the route is half the length.

Connection node to Tilbury

The Applicant's preferred option enters the connection node from the west and is briefly parallel to the proposed Bramford corridor. It passes between Colchester and the AONB and is located West of Chelmsford.

The Inspectorate queried the direction from which the project would come into Tilbury. The Applicant advised it is expected to come in from the North of Tilbury.

This option is favoured by the Applicant because it reduces impacts on ecology and heritage and is also the most buildable, when compared to more coastal routes.

Next Steps

The Applicant will continue with non-statutory consultation as follows:

- Member briefings – from 14 April 2022
- Launch of consultation – 21 April 2022
- Q&A drop-in for LAs – mid May 2022
- Close of consultation – 16 June 2022

The Applicant also plans to respond and consider received consultation feedback to help inform their design development.

Specific decisions/ follow-up required?

The following actions were agreed:

- The Applicant advised that they are likely to submit a request for a Scoping Opinion around September 2022 at the earliest.

- The Inspectorate advised that a project email address will be set up for the project and a case team formed. A project page on the National Infrastructure website will also be created (**Post Meeting Note**: the project website has been published and it contains the project email address).

- The Inspectorate advised that regular meetings may be beneficial and suggested a meeting just after the close of the non-statutory consolation. The Applicant advised EIA may want a meeting in approximately 2 months' time (**Post Meeting Note**: this has now been arranged for 4 July 2022).